FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

258

SECURITY: UNCLASSIFIED PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

755.11/7-2051

TO: Department of State

FROM: LONDON 379, July 20, 1951

REF:

SUBJECT: Times Editorial on "The Belgian Throne"

EUR INDEX

For Dept. use only.
RECD JUL 24

ACTION: EUR*

INFO: REP DCR GER* OLI* IE* UNA ECA* c

There are enclosed copies of an editorial from the Times of July 17, 1951 dealing with the accession of Baudouin I to the Belgian throne. The Times calls attention to the constitutional issue raised by King Leopold's surrender to the Germans and expresses the hope that the nation will be reunited "around a monarchy which now makes a fresh start."

Roger L. Heacock
Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure:

Times, July 17, 1951

CC: Brussels

755.11/7-2051

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1951 JUL 26 PM 1 26
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MESSAGE CENTER

Approved:
Benjamin M. Hulley
First Secretary of Embassy

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20 JUL 1951

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THE BELGIAN THRONE

KING LEOPOLD of the BELGIANS abdicated yesterday, and to-day his eldest son will assume the royal title as BAUDOUIN I. With these acts, performed in due order and with the assent of the responsible leaders of the Belgian people, it can be hoped that the long and bitter debate on the "royal question" will finally be relinquished by the politicians to the historians. The controversy has divided Belgians since May 19, 1940, when KING LEOPOLD surrendered the Belgian armed forces in the face of overwhelming German strength; his Prime Minister, M. PIERLOT, immediately declared the surrender to be invalid, since it was made in disregard of a fundamental principle in the Constitution, that any act of the King requires the counter-signature of a Minister, who thereby takes responsibility for the act. Since that time the debate over the conduct of KING LEOPOLD has ranged widely, involving itself (as debates will) in many questions of personal attitudes and conduct that were not strictly germane to the constitutional issue. The more damaging imputations against KING LEOPOLD'S personal conduct have never been proved, their acceptance has diminished as the passions of war have died down, and they can now properly be forgotten. In surrendering the monarchy formally and finally to his son KING LEOPOLD has done his duty, and his personal honour is no longer in question.

The constitutional issue raised by the events of 1940 was, however, real. No State can risk the possibility that at decisive moments the King in his capacity of Commander-in-Chief may take one path and the Ministers may take another. A committee of jurists and members of Parliament examined this question during the Regency which preceded KING LEOPOLD'S return, and its main finding—a strong reaffirmation of the principle that the military as well as the civil acts of the King require Ministerial counter-signature — was accepted by the KING in exile. No doubt the new reign will see the principle asserted by Parliament beyond the possibility of any dispute. It is a question of international no less than of Belgian significance. Twice in successive reigns Belgium has been dragged into war and the King as Commander-in-Chief has been suddenly confronted with an intolerably painful decision. To-day Belgium is no longer neutral, and it fell to the new KING in his position as Prince-Royal to sign the decree in January which placed the Belgian armed forces at the disposal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The constitutional principle is a guarantee that personal strain or human errors of judgment will not again separate the Government and the Army in a moment of decision.

Friends of Belgium everywhere will wish the new KING well. Successive disasters

as the civil acts of the King require Ministerial counter-signature — was accepted by the KING in exile. No doubt the new reign will see the principle asserted by Parliament beyond the possibility of any dispute. It is a question of international no less than of Belgian significance. Twice in successive reigns Belgium has been dragged into war and the King as Commander-in-Chief has been suddenly confronted with an intolerably painful decision. To-day Belgium is no longer neutral, and it fell to the new KING in his position as Prince-Royal to sign the decree in January which placed the Belgian armed forces at the disposal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The constitutional principle is a guarantee that personal strain or human errors of judgment will not again separate the Government and the Army in a moment of decision.

Friends of Belgium everywhere will wish the new KING well. Successive disasters have marked the first twenty years of his life. His grandfather, KING ALBERT, was killed in the Ardennes when PRINCE BAUDOUIN was a boy of three. His mother was killed in the motoring accident at Küssnacht before he was five. He was in his eleventh year, at the age at which the boys of his family would normally be preparing for a public school, when the Germans seized his country. While controversy flared up over his father the family lived as prisoners in occupied Belgium and in Germany, and their liberation was followed by five years of exile. When at length he returned to Belgium in June of last year, still showing the close attachment to his father in which he has never swerved, the "royal question" reached its most acute and painful phase, and only in the face of civil tension and disorder was the fact at length accepted that the unification of the Belgian people was possible only around him. The personality of the PRINCE was at that time almost unknown in the country. But he has now exercised the royal powers for the greater part of a year; he has shown himself modest and conscientious, and his bearing has given reassurance.

To the social divisions and the differences of religion and ideas which are almost universal in the nations of western Europe, Belgium adds the further division, ancient and emphatic, between the Flemish and Walloon peoples. The prime functions of the monarchy are to provide a stabilizing institution in the State and a unifying influence binding together the two peoples of different language and habit. It is the general hope that the sections of the nation that have been at variance can reunite around a monarchy which now makes a fresh start. It is, in the last analysis, the Belgian nation which by its own restraint and good sense has refused to be divided.

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(Classification)

DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE
755.11/8-851

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : BRUSSELS — 157 DESP. NO. — August 8, 1951 DATE

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — AIR POUCH PRIORITY

REF : 1951 AUG 14 PM 4 13

EUR INDEX

SUBJECT: THE LAW FIXING THE CIVIL LIST

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

For Dept. Use Only
REC'D AUG 13
ACTION EUR
INFO REP DCR OLI E ECA tk

755.11/8-851

There is enclosed a translation of the Law of July 24, 1951, fixing the Civil List for the duration of King Baudouin's reign, as published in the MONITEUR BELGE of July 27, 1951.

The Civil List provides that the royal family shall receive the following amounts:

Chief of State (King Baudouin)	36,000,000 francs
Royal Family (King Leopold and his family)	6,000,000 francs
Queen Elizabeth	4,000,000 francs
Prince Charles	4,000,000 francs
	50,000,000 francs

The Civil List of the Chief of State was increased from 30,000,000 francs to 36,000,000 francs to compensate for the rise in cost of living and the devaluation and depreciation of the Belgian franc. The law provides that, when King Baudouin marries, his Civil List will be increased to 42,000,000 francs.

In his report to the Chamber of Deputies, PSC Deputy SCHEYVEN, speaking for the Chamber Commission of Finance, pointed out that Article 77 of the Belgian Constitution states: "The law determines the Civil List for the duration of each reign". According to Mr. Scheyven, this procedure serves a double purpose: first, "the Civil List is fixed once and for all, for it is contrary to the dignity and independence of the Crown that this determining should become the subject of renewed debates and thus become an object of party passion"; second, it avoids the abuse of influence either by the Sovereign or Parliament, "the one to obtain an increase of the Civil List, the other to reduce it or to subordinate the vote of necessary credits to certain conditions".

During the debate of the bill in the Chamber of Deputies Socialist Deputy HUYSMANS, announcing that the Socialist Deputies would abstain from the vote, criticized the proposal to

AUG 24 1951

RWKautsky
REPORTER(S)

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PREPARATION TIME

AUG 14 1951

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determine the Civil List at each new reign, increased each time because of economic conditions. Huysmans stated that the Civil List should be a fixed sum which would have, at the same time, a variable character permitting its adaptation to the cost of living.

In the Senate debate Communist Senator TAILLARD, and in the Chamber debate Communist Deputy DEJACE, protested in similar speeches against the "squandering" of such large sums of money, contrasting the amount of the Civil List with workers' wages, unemployment compensations and pensions; and each concluded his speech by crying: "Not a cent for the royal family. Down with the Monarchy".

On July 18, the Chamber of Deputies adopted the Civil List by 113 votes against 8 (Communist) with 55 abstentions (Socialist), and the Senate adopted the Civil List by 90 votes against 8 (Communist) with 44 abstentions (Socialist).

For the Ambassador,

Robert McClintock

ROBERT MCCLINTOCK
First Secretary of Embassy

all

/Enclosure: 1 translation

SECURITY : UNCLASSIFIED

ENCLOSURE NO. 1
to Brussels Despatch No. 157

TRANSLATION

from the MONITEUR BELGE, July 27, 1951

July 24, 1951. Law Determining the Civil List for the Duration of the Reign of King Baudouin.

Baudouin, King of the Belgians,

To all, present and to come, greetings.

The Chambers have adopted and We sanction the following:

Article 1. The Civil List is fixed at thirty-six million francs (36,000,000) for the duration of the reign of H. M. Baudouin. It will be increased to forty-two million francs (42,000,000) on January 1 of the year during the course of which the King shall contract marriage.

Article 2. The royal residences are put at the disposition of the King, the expenses for their interior maintenance and their furnishing to be provided from the Civil List.

However, the fuel necessary for the heating of the Brussels palace will be furnished by the State.

We promulgate this law, order that it bear the seal of the State, and be published by the MONITEUR BELGE.

Given at Brussels, July 24, 1951.

Baudouin.

For the King: The Prime Minister:
J. Pholien

Seen and affixed with the seal of the State:
The Minister of Justice: L. Moyersoen